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WHAT IS HISTORY?

ADDRESS OF

PROFESSOR E. P. CHEYNEY, '83, C.,

BEFORE THE GRADUATE SCHOOL,

October 3, 1907.

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PROFESSOR E. P. CHEYNEY, '83 C.

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What is history? Let us go to the Father of History and ask him. Herodotus introduces his work by saying, "This is a publication of the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, in order that the actions of men may not be effaced by time, nor the great and wondrous deeds displayed both by Greeks and barbarians deprived of renown, and why the Greeks and barbarians waged war on one another."

His object, that is to say, is to recount the actions of men and the causes of them. It is true that the actions which he is to recount are only the great actions, and the men whose deeds are thought worthy of notice are only the great men. All the rest of mankind with all their doings are relegated to a dim and misty obscurity. Nevertheless, the main idea of Herodotus is clear. He does not want a good story to be lost and forgotten, therefore he will tell us what happened. He looks upon history simply as a tale of the doings of men.

Other Greek and later historians have looked upon the matter differently. Thucydides says, "Perhaps the lack of wonderful stories in my work will make it less pleasing to my readers; but it will be enough for me if it proves to be useful to those who want to have a clear knowledge of the past, and thereby of that which, according to the course of human events, will happen again." According to Thucydides, therefore, history is not merely a narrative, it should be useful. Polybius, likewise, criticizing Herodotus, says, "It is not enough merely to describe the course of events, one must seek to understand the why and the wherefore of them, in order to draw instruction therefrom." A German historian of the seventeenth century says, "History is that which teaches the reader what things in life are useful and to be followed, or injurious and to be avoided." A modern English historian says, "History is a voice forever sounding across the centuries the law of right and wrong."

That is to say, history, according to this view of the case, is meant to instruct. It should teach some lesson. The lesson may be a political one or a moral one or a religious one. But it is always history with a purpose,—its justification is ethical.

Far and wide through historical writing can be found this ideal. Sometimes it is consciously and strongly held. There is a work in eight volumes in the University Library with the title, "The History of England on Christian Principles." Sometimes it is less consciously and clearly acknowledged, and yet the historian none the less tells his story under its influence. Macaulay is a devotee of the Whig party and is teaching its doctrines when he is writing his history of the seventeenth century as much as when he is speaking or voting in Parliament in the nineteenth. Froude uses his history of England to teach the evils of the Roman Catholic Church and to discredit Anglican clericalism, exactly as he uses any of his other forms of writing.

The moral purpose of the historian often appears as a patriotic purpose. Bancroft wrote his history in such a way that Americans should think well of their country, much as Gilbert Stuart painted Washington in such a way that Americans should feel universal admiration for the Father of his Country. Livy in writing the history of Rome is obviously trying to teach his readers devotion to it.

This patriotic sentiment is not only the most familiar form of history with a moral purpose, but it has lent much spirit and interest to historical writing. Green's "History of the English People" is permeated by a gentle and sincere patriotism that conciliates his readers and casts a glamour over the whole of English History. Thiers's admiration for Napoleon and devotion to France have infused a fire into his "Consulate and Empire" that have led to their constant republication in France and other countries. Treitschke and Sybel have given a genuine popular defense for the modern Prussian state in their great histories of Germany in the nineteenth century.

Patriotic history, when mixed with certain other ingredients, forms excellent poetry. Kipling makes his two English children standing on a Sussex hillside learn their history from the fairy Puck as he points out to them its visible marks around them.

See you the dimpled track that runs,
All hollow through the wheat?
O that was where they hauled the guns
That smote King Philip's fleet.

See you our little mill that clacks,
So busy by the brook?
She has ground her corn and paid her tax
Ever since Domesday Book.

See you our stilly woods of oak,
And the dread ditch beside?
O that was where the Saxons broke,
On the day that Harold died.

See you the windy levels spread
About the gates of Rye?
O that was where the Northmen fled,
When Alfred's ships came by.

See you our pastures wide and lone,
Where the red oxen browse?
O there was a City thronged and known,
Ere London boasted a house.

And see you, after rain, the trace
Of mound and ditch and wall?
O that was a Legion's camping-place,
When Cæsar sailed from Gaul.

And see you marks that show and fade,
Like shadows on the Downs?
O they are the lines the Flint Men made,
To guard their wondrous towns.

Trackway and Camp and City lost,
Salt marsh where now is corn,
Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that cease,
And so was England born!

How much of long-past and recently-past history is reflected in the present poet-laureate's fine appeal of England to Ireland:

Spouse whom my sword in the olden time won me,
Winning me hatred more sharp than a sword—
Mother of children who hiss at or shun me,
Curse or revile me, and hold me abhorred—
Heiress of anger that nothing assuages,
Mad for the future and mad for the past—
Daughter of all the implacable ages,
Lo, let us turn and be lovers at last!

Lovers whom tragical sin hath made equal,
One in transgression and one in remorse,
Bonds may be severed, but what were the sequel?
Hardly shall amity come of divorce.
Let the dead Past have a royal entombing,
O'er it the future built white for a fane!
I that am haughty from much overcoming
Sue to thee, supplicate—nay, is it vain?

Hate and mistrust are the children of blindness,—
Could we but see one another, 'twere well!
Knowledge is sympathy, charity, kindness,
Ignorance only is maker of hell.
Could we but gaze for an hour, for a minute,
Deep in each other's unfaltering eyes,
Love were begun—for that look would begin it—
Born in the flash of a mighty surprise.

History no doubt can be written, has been frequently written, in prose as lofty as poetry, in such a way that certain moral or religious or political principles, broad and fundamental, or narrow and contentious, are brought out. In the vast mass of historical facts the historian will naturally find those that he seeks, and he may, if he will, arrange his materials and make moral reflections upon them in accordance with his beliefs and preconceptions.

But this ideal costs its price. The historian under its influence feels called upon to make ethical judgments of actions and of men,—defending or condemning historical personages and their actions. Men of the past are thought of as models to be followed or warnings of what is to be avoided, or at least as objects of admiration or dislike. This leads to the habit of ascribing extreme historical importance to the character and work of individuals and correspondingly little influence to the general conditions of the time or to the great mass of people. Good and bad motives can be ascribed to persons, not to the conditions of civilization that surround them; certain named persons can be praised or blamed, the great unnamed masses cannot be. So the historian dilates on the psychological and moral characteristics of a few prominent individuals and supposes them to have had great freedom of action and an unbounded extent of influence. Motley's William of Orange,

and Philip of Spain, Carlyle's Robespierre and Cromwell, Froude's Henry VIII, Macaulay's William III, and a crowd of lesser heroes of lesser historians owe much of their conspicuous position in history to the admiration or condemnation of them in the mind of their historians; and history itself comes to be looked upon as the acts of a few great men using the rest of mankind simply as their instruments.

But the greatest price we have to pay for this ethical attitude toward history is the intense subjectivity it gives to it. Everything comes to the reader as interpreted by the historian. Everything is seen through the medium of his personality. The facts of history when they are used to teach a moral lesson do not reach us in their entirety, nor grouped and generalized according to their internal relations, but selected and arranged according to the overmastering ideal in the mind of the historian. The reader is at the historian's mercy. The same set of facts, that is to say the history of the same country or period, comes to us as a Catholic, a Protestant or an Anglican history, according to the lesson that the historian wants to teach. We have histories of the French Revolution from the French, the English and the German,—from the republican and the royalist point of view. A certain series of events will appear entirely different, under this ideal, according as the person who recounts them is a rationalist or a devotee. We must balance Whig against Tory, Northerner against Southerner. The conflicts of the past are perpetuated by the very chroniclers who recount their history. Thus history sells its birthright of truth for a mess of the pottage of partisanship. If the function of history is to teach, it fulfils it but ill when the lesson to be drawn from it depends so largely on the interpreter.

But let us turn to another ideal. We may find it also among the ancients. Phylarchus is described by a contemporary as "amazing his readers by a series of thrilling anecdotes," as, "studying dramatic propriety like a writer of tragedy." Livy speaks of the new historians of his time as believing that they can "by their skill in the art of writing improve on the rudeness of ancient writers." We have similar modern aphorisms. "History should make the past live again." "A history should always be an epic." This is a literary or aesthetic ideal. Its choice of

subject, its selection of material, its forms of arrangement and statement are dominated by literary, almost by artistic feeling. History is looked upon as a branch of literature. Just as the former view of history was that it should instruct, so this is that it should please. Daunou, in his *Cours d'études historiques,* delivered at the Collège de France seventy-five or eighty years ago, brings out clearly this view of history. He advises the writer of history to read modern novels as examples. He says: "They will teach the method of giving an artistic pose to persons and events, of distributing details, of skilfully carrying on the thread of the narrative, of interrupting it, of resuming it, of sustaining the attention and provoking the curiosity of the reader." In as far as the historian is under this influence he feels the same intellectual elevation, the same creative activity as the writer of a literary essay, a work of fiction, a poem. When Motley, for instance, in his "Rise of the Dutch Republic," describes the scene at the punishment of Ghent by the Emperor Charles V; its civic officials in their black robes, the military bodies, the guildsmen thronging the hall and the populace crowding the streets, his mind reverts to another great epic scene where

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearls and gold,
> Satan exalted sat—

and he closes his own description with the fine parody, "High on his throne, with the Queen Regent at his side, surrounded by princes, prelates and nobles, guarded by his archers and halberdiers, his crown on his head and his sceptre in his hand, the Emperor, exalted, sat." That is to say, Motley is writing in much the same spirit as Milton, though, of course, on a vastly lower poetic plane.

Such an ideal leads to the selection of dramatic periods for treatment. Froude begins his history with the fall of Wolsey, when the conflict between the English king and the Roman Catholic system was definitely joined, and announces that it is to extend to the death of Elizabeth. But when Mary, Queen of Scots, has been executed, when the Invincible Armada has been conquered, and the great contest he has been describing

seems to be settled, his dramatic sense tells him that the play, conceiving his period of English history as a play, is over. Therefore, as a dramatist rather than as a historian, he draws down the curtain, closes his book, and leaves the narrative of the last fifteen troubled, difficult and important years of the period he had announced untold. The military conquest of Mexico and Peru by brilliant Spanish *conquistadores* attracted its historian much earlier than the spread of civilized settlement and peaceful development over the interior of the United States. Periods of war have always attracted more historians than have periods of peace.

This treatment gives to history the charm possessed by every work of art. Vigor, grace, color, life, flourish under the dominion of the literary spirit and thrive among literary associations. Macaulay's fine impressiveness, the picturesque delineations of Prescott and Irving, the grace and eloquence of the French historians of the early nineteenth century, are due for the most part to the prominence of the literary ideal in the minds of these writers.

But accompanying these qualities and, unfortunately, almost always characterizing the literary treatment of history, is its weak hold on reality, its incautious use of its materials. In as far as a historian is influenced by this ideal, he is thinking, in reality, first of his reader, only secondarily of his facts. He is striving to produce an æsthetic effect, not to elucidate the past. Therefore he does not look narrowly at what he finds in his contemporary sources. He carelessly misinterprets them, he neglects much that is there but which is not suited to literary uses; he sometimes finds things that are not there at all. His creative imagination is apt to act like that of the poet:

> As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination.

The use of the imagination is an absolute necessity in all intellectual production, but it is also the most dangerous of all foes to clear and exact knowledge. We live in hereditary servi-

tude to our imagination. Through a long line of descent it has possessed a supremacy against which the thoughtful man must struggle for intellectual freedom. This is a matter of evolution and is universal in its action. The bird or the rabbit that perceives a dark shadow passing over it, immediately sees or thinks it sees the spreading wings, the curved talons, and the hungry beak of the hawk swooping down on it, as it cowers close among the grass or leaves, although the shadow may be only that of a passing cloud. Primitive man must have learned to spring to shelter at many a harmless crackling among the bushes that nevertheless brought into his mind a picture of some hungry wild beast, or else we, his remote descendants, would not be here. And the brain that we have inherited from him has not forgotten its old trick of self-deception. We, like he did, live in a world of self-created ideas, only kept measurably close to reality by the most rigorous mental habits. The historian is subject to the common temptation; so in the mind of Motley grows up the picture of an imaginary Philip II, a cruel, calculating, malevolent being, sitting in his study at Madrid, holding the threads of a great conspiracy against the happiness and well-being of the people of half of Europe and all of America. So Livy and Tacitus and a crowd of other historians, like the poets and the moralists, look back to a purely imaginary early period of virtue and honor and unselfishness. So our historical traditions become full of extraordinarily good and extraordinarily bad people; certain periods are described as pre-eminently happy and others as unspeakably miserable; institutions are believed to have existed which would have been destructive to the human race; historic shadows are apt to fall preternaturally dark and the lights to glow incredibly bright. Imagination plays a brilliant but a deceptive part in history.

The borderland between history as a form of literature and historical fiction is a shifting and an uncertain one. Well on one side of the boundary we have fine constructive historical literature; well on the other, we have admirable historical novels; but between the two there is a debatable land where outlaws continually dwell,—some of the "histories" of Thierry, Froude, and Thomas Watson, for instance; some of the "novels" of Chateaubriand, Georg Ebers, and Miss Mühlbach and their

congeners,—exiled from the more orderly regions on both sides by the critics, historical or literary, who represent established rule in both realms.

There are still other historical ideals. One man, a philosopher, says that the proper object of history is the training of the time-concept; that is to say, the life of a single man is so short that it is only by considering the life of the whole human race that we can get any adequate idea of the meaning of the expression "time." I am inclined to believe that more than one of my specialist colleagues in this faculty looks on history as a sort of background of general occurrences and conditions on which his special objects of interest are projected; a sort of Greek chorus to explain and comment, while the development of English or French or German literature, or mathematics, or political economy, or chemistry, or philosophy, occupies the center of the stage. And far be it from me to deny the name of history to any of the forms of writing we have discussed. History is not a definite technical term, like geometry, or chemistry, or logic, or astronomy. It is a broad, general expression, more nearly analogous to the words "science" or "philosophy." In actual usage, even by historians, it connotes little more than the fact that the matters under consideration have occurred in the past, rather than in the present. There are not merely two forms, good history and bad history. There may be many types of reasonably good history. Nor is any one writer entirely under the domination of any one historical ideal; several may exist coincidently in his mind; he may at different times be influenced more largely by one or another conception of his subject; nevertheless the fact remains that the ethical, the literary and the specialist's types of history that have now been reviewed have been and are especially widespread and influential.

I want now to turn to another ideal, which looks at history from no one of these points of view; which conceives of it neither as primarily intended to give instruction nor primarily to give pleasure; which does not place it in the service of any other particular branch of knowledge, but allows it to exist for its own sake. According to this conception of history, the past is looked at simply, directly, objectively; it is conceived of as merely something to be understood and explained.

Just as a geologist studies the physical conformation of a country, its strata and its fossils, endeavors to understand and then to describe the conditions they indicate; just as the astronomer makes his observations and investigations and reaches the results of his study; just as the student of any branch of knowledge approaches his subject, so the historian may approach the past of the human race, study what mankind has done and said and thought, strive to understand, strive to explain. He can look upon his subject as simply a body of facts, to be investigated and described for their own sakes; not with a view of drawing a lesson from them, not with a view of praising or blaming any one, not with a view of so choosing and putting the facts as to give emotional pleasure to the reader,—not, in fact, with any ulterior purpose whatever; but simply to take human history as his object of study,—just as one might take any other group of phenomena.

This is the modern scholar's conception of history, as contrasted with the ethical or the literary conception. It might be called the scientific method of treating history. The scientific method means nothing more than the simple method; the direct approach to a subject, seeking knowledge for its own sake, without ulterior objects or ultimate expectations of any kind from it, using accurate methods of observation, logical processes of classification, trained powers of comprehension and explanation,—that is all that a scientific method means,—and it is just as applicable to history as to any other field of knowledge.

Such an answer to the question, what is history?—such an historical ideal, has, like others, its own rewards and its own demands. It must not be supposed, in the first place, that such historical work is necessarily a thankless or an unappreciated task. More than fifty years ago a fellow-townsman of ours, Mr. Lea, took up the study of the history of mediæval law and certain mediæval and early modern institutions, especially those connected with the church. He is still at work in that field, and at this very moment, in all probability, his fine gray head is bending over the proof sheets of the fourth and final volume of his "History of the Spanish Inquisition." He had from the beginning an intense desire to know, and an open mind. He felt no attraction to polemical and secondary discussions, but went

direct to the raw material from which all historical knowledge must be constructed. He has had means that have enabled him to gather in his own library a great body of such sources of history as are published, and to have many manuscripts copied from the libraries of Europe; he has applied keen mental powers and infinite industry and perseverance to these materials, and has given to the world just what he has found. This has been embodied in some fifteen volumes, which have been published from time to time during the half century of his labors. They are not, of course, popular history, and their titles are not such as to conciliate popular interest. Nevertheless many thousand copies and repeated editions have been printed, sold and read; they are to be found in every public and many private libraries; every scholar interested in the history of the Middle Ages knows and uses them; every professor of history who teaches that period requires his students to read parts of them; they have been translated into various languages, and they stand now as representing the principal body of acquired knowledge in that portion of the history of the world. In many circles in many cities of Europe you might name over the list of Philadelphia's business men, lawyers and physicians, and find that not a name was recognized. The first gleam of recognition to give comfort to our local patriotism would come with the mention of Henry C. Lea.

We might come still nearer home in our search for a test of appreciation of purely scholarly history. In our midst, I refer to the head of my own department, is one who, when American history was invariably written with one tendency or another, began the writing of it absolutely without partisanship; who, when the romantic episodes of colonial days were familiar but the period since the Revolutionary War relatively unknown, began to tell the great story of our national existence; who, when the historical material used was only that found in statutes, legislative proceedings, public correspondence and other such official documents, examined and utilized all the sources for the knowledge of our past. With no special lesson to teach or philosophy to maintain, and only interested to find out and to understand and to explain, he entered on the survey of all the varied interests of our nation since we have been a

nation, and in this spirit has written the "History of the People of the United States." It has become one of our "standard" histories. Some thirty thousand copies are spread through the community, to exercise with similar modern works a widespread influence. The history of our national period is now at least as well known as that of the colonial period, the times of peace have been raised in general estimation to at least as high a level of interest as those of war, the prevailing attitude toward the study of the first century of our national history is one of non-partisanship, there is no longer any body of historical material which is completely neglected. The influence of such work on methods of study has been even deeper than its addition to our knowledge. Now the mere post-graduate student of American History approaches his subject from a direction, and uses material that twenty-five years ago the veteran did not know. The very completeness with which the work has been accomplished is apt to blind us to its extent; but it cannot diminish the service performed by, or the honor due to, the pioneer who first hewed out a way for himself and for us. It is not therefore the admiration of a pupil for his teacher, it is not loyalty to a colleague, it is no mere attachment to a friend, that leads me to take as an example of not unappreciated and yet purely objective treatment of history, calm, impersonal, unprejudiced as to persons or as to parties, dominated by the single object of making clear the past, the work of Professor McMaster.

Not only is scholarly historical work not unappreciated by others, it is a worthy work for the man who does it. It calls for all the mental powers with which he may be endowed. Historical investigation is a work of infinite difficulty. Not only must the historian spend "laborious days and wakeful nights," but he must bring to his work ability and training. The material with which he has to work is enormous in amount, difficult to collect, difficult to classify, difficult to interpret. The geologist, the chemist, the biologist, the student of literature, all make their own observations. The facts they work with are what they have themselves seen or can otherwise test by direct means. The historical facts with which we must deal come to us, for the most part, not through our own observations, but on

the testimony of men who once saw or heard them but are now long dead. We must weigh and measure their credibility, their opportunity and their ability to have observed correctly. Our facts often come to us clothed in dead languages and obscure terms. We must find out just what these mean.

No power to put ourselves mentally into another's place can be too great for the historian's needs. We read the statements of a mediæval or an ancient chronicler. He was a man of another age than our own, surrounded by institutions which have long since disappeared, ruled by ideas that are not our ideas, using the names of things that we have never seen. How shall we comprehend and interpret what he tells us? Here is the need for the historic imagination; its normal use is in understanding and interpreting the sources, not in writing the final draught of the narrative.

No keenness of mental analysis is too great for historical uses. Historical facts are often the actions, the words, the very thoughts and motives of men, and we must make a psychological judgment of them. No moral powers, no breadth of sympathy, no capacity for entering into the feelings as well as the thoughts of other men comes amiss. For the scholarly historian must understand, and in a certain sense take part with both sides of all the controversies of the past. He must appreciate the horror of the orthodox for heresy and he must sympathize with the heretic who cannot accept the teachings of those in authority. He must enter into the slaveholder's point of view, and he must comprehend the antagonism to slavery of the abolitionist. He must rise above the controversial elements in these conflicts and see why each party felt as it did. This can only be done by adding to a knowledge of the circumstances a genuine sympathetic comprehension of the feelings or belief of each side. A certain largeness of view is requisite for a study which is concerned with the doings of all mankind and with the thoughts and feelings of all representatives of our race.

No power over our glorious mother tongue can be spared by the scientific historian. Perfect clarity in stating the results of his investigations, the choice of the right word to represent every shade of human experience in the past, force to describe past conditions, and even eloquence to describe past events, all

can be well utilized, so far as gifts or training put them into the possession of the historian. This, you may say, brings us back to history as a form of literature. Far from it. The question with which we have been concerned is of ideals, not of instruments. What I am now pleading for is literary power and effectiveness as a means, not as an end; as a tool in the hands of the scholarly historian, not as a final object to be sought for for its own sake. So long as our historical ideal remains the simple and accurate discovery and statement of what has occurred in the past, the use of all the resources of our language is nothing more than a wise utilization of all available means to that end.

So there need be no fear that this historical ideal will not exercise all the powers that can be brought into its service. Moreover, it has its own exhilaration and charm. The scientific writer of history builds no Gothic cathedral, full of irregularities and suggestiveness, aspiring arches, niches filled with sacred or grotesque figures, and aisles dim with religious light,—that is work for the literary historian. But he builds a classic temple: simple, severe, symmetrical in its lines, surrounded by the clear, bright light of truth, pervaded by the spirit of moderation. Every historical fact is a stone hewn from the quarry of past records; it must be solid and square and even-hued—an ascertained fact. Whether it is a deed, a word, a motive, a custom, a condition,—it must have really existed in the past. And whether the historian is describing the life of some person, or the history of some nation, a short period of time, or a single aspect of the history of some period, the discovery of a country, the foundation of a commonwealth, or the progress of a revolution, or it may be only the formation of some treaty, or the inception of some war—he is still a builder. He must examine all his materials; he must know all the facts which can be ascertained concerning his subject; he must select those which are available for his purpose, those which really help to explain his subject; and then he must write his history, erect his structure, build his temple, with what skill he may. His design already exists, the events have actually occurred, the past has really been—his task is to approach as near to the design as he possibly can.

Such is the ideal of history, such is that answer to the question with which we began, that I should like to submit to you as the worthiest—the attitude toward history that it is simply a body of material to be studied, understood and described, exactly as the biologist has his material, the chemist his, the mathematician his; except that it is infinitely more complex, more difficult, more fascinating than any.

I would suggest that this view of history is especially suited to the purlieus of a great university, where each field of human knowledge and interest has its devotees, animated by just the same spirit, dominated by just the same ideal. I would suggest that it is especially suited to such a university as this, founded without political, religious or social bias; nurtured in freedom from the control of any party or sect; at no time failing entirely to hold up the standard of human culture for its own sake; at the present time granting to its professors and students perfect liberty to investigate and declare the results of their investigations, to seek and to state the truth as they believe they have discovered it. I would suggest that this attitude toward history should especially appeal to post-graduate students. If an objective, direct, scientific habit of looking at one's work is once attained it is not easily lost. It will remain a solid foundation under the feet during all subsequent floods of reading, writing and controversy; a man or woman who has once done a piece of scientific work that is absolutely impregnable to assaults of criticism on its methods and its material, may afterward safely add to his later work all the insight, all the powers of interpretation, all the excellences of language, that training and the experiences of life may bring to him. First critical study, then a scientific monograph, and then, if the fates allow, a great history.

You may say that to take away from the writing of history ethical and patriotic and political teaching as objects, and to depose it from its position as a form of pure literature, is to give it too humble a rôle to play, that the scholarly historian is made too lowly and too meek in his claims. But remember the beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The earth! What better inheritance could the his-

torian wish? The earth with all its ancient nations, with all its crowding memories, with all the story of the human race that has been lived upon it. The historian may not, like the poet or the philosopher, rise to the heavens or deal with the eternities, but he can well be satisfied to trace the fortunes of humanity, with its joys and sufferings, its conflicts, its failures, its attainments; with all its keen interest,—because it is, after all, our common humanity.

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